fuels treatments to determine the appropriate level of environmental analysis required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and streamlining the preparation of environmental assessments for such treatments when NEPA requires them.

4. Biomass Utilization

Biomass thinning and utilization of hazardous fuels are increasing on federal lands. Consistent with the National Fire Plan, the President's *Healthy Forests Initiative*, and the National Energy Policy, land management agencies are pursuing strategies to expand forest and fiber markets. Forest and woodland management and restoration treatments are producing timber and special forest products and wood fiber for energy production.

Examples of biomass utilization projects supporting the fuel treatment program include:

- With special funding from its management of lands and resources accounts, the Bureau of Land Management began formulating a biomass utilization strategy in September 2002, in support of the National Energy Policy, to utilize hazardous fuel by-products generated from National Fire Plan fuel treatment activities.
- The Warm Springs Forest Products Industries, acting on behalf of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, with Bureau of Indian Affairs support, developed a proposal to expand the tribes' existing biomass energy plant to a capacity of 10 megawatts. This will enable the tribes to expand beyond using only mill waste as fuel to including small trees and forest residues from forest restoration and hazardous fuel reduction treatments.
- The Small Diameter Utilization Program is a collaborative effort between Forest Service Forest Management, State and Private Forestry (Cooperative Forestry, Forest Products Lab, Fire and Aviation Management, Research and Forest Health Protection), states, universities, and non-government organizations, to support vegetation management/ fuels reduction efforts on National Forest System lands. The goal is to help solve operational problems and assure appropriate information use through direct field assistance, sharing the most current information, connecting subject area experts with practitioners, and preparing information for field professionals. Program support areas include presale and contracting, logging systems, technology transfer, forest products and manufacturing, biomass, and marketing.

5. Forest Health Protection

In addition to those acres at high risk from wildland fire, 70 million acres of forestlands are at high risk to insect and pathogen-caused mortality. Of these, 9.5 million acres are at risk to insect and disease mortality on National Forest System Lands. The National Fire Plan has enhanced efforts to implement insect and disease prevention and suppression treatments.

This year, National Fire Plan funds were used to treat 458,456 acres. In addition to these treatments, nearly one million more acres were treated with other program funds.

A total of 89,000 acres were scheduled for treatment of invasive weeds; however, due to the 2002 fire season and the states' fiscal cycles, only 6,039 acres were treated. The remaining acres will be treated in early spring of 2003.

In addition to prevention and suppression projects for insects, diseases, and invasive plants, Forest Health Protection allocated $652,765 for forest health monitoring projects. These funds supported nine evaluation monitoring research projects that targeted National Fire Plan issues including fire risk, invasive species, and fire effects to determine cause, extent and severity of detected problems. Funds also were used to support aerial surveys of insect and disease mortality and assessments of burned areas.

Examples of forest health projects supporting the fuel hazard reduction program include:

- On the Lassen National Forest in California, a goshawk management area had significant white fir and pine mortality resulting from a beetle infestation. National Fire Plan funds were used to thin the stand to maintain old growth trees, reduce ladder fuels, and increase growth rate to restore and protect habitat for the Northern goshawk.
- Forest Health Protection technical specialists implemented a thinning project to protect healthy Douglas-fir trees and maintain an acceptable forest-cover in highly valued recreation areas in western Montana and northern Idaho on National Forest lands, and state and private lands. The same techniques were used to assist private landowners to protect Douglas-fir on their property through cost-share program funding.
- Sudden Oak Death (SOD), a recently discovered disease in the United States, has killed tens of thousands of oak and tanoak trees in coastal California. It was first discovered in Oregon in July 2001. National Fire Plan funds were used to eradicate SOD on 40 acres. A strong cooperative

effort of Oregon Department of Forestry, Forest Service, Oregon Department of Agriculture, and Oregon State University resulted in detecting and limiting the SOD pathogen to a nine-square mile regulated area in Curry County, rather than to the whole county or state.

Community Assistance

Wildland urban interface areas exist wherever homes and businesses are built among trees, brush, and other combustible vegetation. There are wildland urban interface communities throughout the United States in both rural locations and in urban areas. Fires move from forest, brush or grassland into communities or from communities into adjacent wildland. Either way, community involvement is a key element in reducing fire hazards near communities and in restoring damaged landscapes. Community assistance programs focus on building community capacity to develop and carry out citizen-driven solutions that will reduce community vulnerability to risks associated with wildland fire.

Communities need assistance in many ways. Assistance was delivered through support for educating citizens, community protection planning, training and equipping fire fighters, purchasing equipment or treating vegetation and landscapes around communities. In FY 2002, thousands of communities were assisted with a wide range of activities. A large proportion of federal assistance was delivered through grant programs administered by state foresters. Community assistance efforts in FY 2002 emphasized working together at all levels of government and encouraging active participation from citizens and landowners.

1. State Fire Assistance Program (Forest Service)

The State Fire Assistance (SFA) program, authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, provides technical and financial assistance to states for meeting all aspects of wildland fire management. The National Fire Plan expanded SFA efforts and provided a renewed focus on the wildland urban interface problems in virtually every state. Special emphasis was placed on hazard mitigation. The following four key elements guide delivery of hazard mitigation funds:

- Fire prevention and mitigation
- Information dissemination and education
- Fuel mitigation treatments
- Homeowner and community hazard mitigation projects

In FY 2002, SFA grants exceeding $51 million were awarded to states to address protection needs on private and state lands. All funds are matched dollar-for-dollar from state and other sources including donated labor from citizens and businesses at the local level. Many cases were reported where matching contributions exceeded four times the required amount. Grants funded an estimated 11,400 mitigation and education campaigns and nearly 400 community plans. Also funded were 2,686 hazard mitigation projects and training for approximately 13,000 firefighters.

Volunteers Help Create Awareness

The first line of defense against wildland fires this summer was more than airborne fire retardant or smokejumpers. It included hundreds of specially trained volunteers of the Student Conservation Association Fire Education Corps (SCA). Made up of college-age volunteers, the corps' purpose is to create awareness and educate local communities about defensible space and wildland fire dangers. With National Fire Plan support from the five federal wildland fire management agencies, they conducted workshops, evaluated homes and recommended steps to reduce risks from wildland fire, and organized, facilitated, and participated in fuels reduction projects.

2. The Firewise Communities Program

The Firewise Communities Program, funded by the National Fire Protection Association, the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior and many other state, federal, and non-profit partners, is a highly successful part of community hazard mitigation efforts. The program encourages communities and homeowners to take responsibility for hazard mitigation through land use planning, building codes, landscaping codes, zoning, and fire protection.

This was the second year of national level workshops since the National Fire Plan was initiated. Nineteen workshops have been offered to date. They have attracted more than 1800 people, from 600 communities and more than 47 states. Workshop attendees represent a spectrum of community leaders, including land developers, builders, tribal leaders, elected officials, community planners, landscapers, real estate brokers, insurance agents, college professors and homeowners as well as fire and emergency-service officials. To help capture this target audience, project organizers have enlisted the endorsement of national stakeholder groups, such as the American Planning Association, the National Association of Home Builders, the Insurance Services Office, the Institute for Business & Home Safety, and the American Red Cross. Currently, there are more than 30 national sponsors. As a spin-off from the national workshops, state and local one-day workshops were offered around the country. About 60 such workshops were conducted, reaching 4,500 community leaders in more than 1,000 communities.

Additionally, the cooperating agencies established the Firewise Communities/USA recognition program in 2002. This program provides special recognition to communities that demonstrate distinctive efforts and commitment to addressing wildfire threats to their community. By participating in the program, neighborhoods across the Nation that are already addressing the wildfire issue are encouraged and acknowledged. Eleven communities in eight states received Firewise Communities/USA recognition in FY 2002.

3. Rural (DOI) and Volunteer (Forest Service) Fire Assistance Programs

Rural Fire Assistance (DOI)

Congress appropriated $10 million in FY 2002 for the Rural Fire Assistance program of the Department of the Interior. Grants were awarded to 1,568 rural fire departments providing technical assistance, training, supplies, equipment, and public education support, thus enhancing firefighter safety and strengthening wildland fire protection capabilities. The Rural Fire Department (RFD) funds are matched on a 90/10 split. RFDs must contribute a minimum of 10% in dollars or in-kind services.

Interior grants and cooperative agreements in support of the National Fire Plan, other than the awards cited above, exceeded $70 million in FY 2002. The money came from funds appropriated for preparedness and fuels reduction work, and was awarded primarily to states and local governments, and to small local and non-profit entities. The awards were used to assist communities in their preparedness and hazardous fuels reduction activities and for training and monitoring associated with these activities on adjacent non-federal land where activities benefit resources on federal land.

Volunteer Fire Assistance (Forest Service)

Approximately $10.4 million in grants were awarded to states through the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program in FY 2002. These funds were passed to 3,781 volunteer fire departments serving 5,900 small communities to help them organize, train, and equip firefighters. Special emphasis was placed on the needs of departments with wildland and dual wildland/structure protection responsibilities common in the interface. Grants funded training for 16,830 firefighters and purchased more than $2.7 million worth of personal protective equipment. Funds also were used to purchase new and used firefighting tools and apparatus, and to upgrade equipment loaned to the states and communities through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program. The state or the local recipient matches all VFA grant funds dollar-for-dollar.

4. Economic Action Programs (Forest Service)

The Economic Action Program (EAP) helps rural communities and organizations seek market-based, natural resource opportunities for businesses and services forming the basis for long-term sustainable forests and communities. The National Fire Plan has taken advantage of more than a decade of community relationship-building developed through the Forest Service EAP. EAP managers worked directly with communities to develop strategies, address social, environmental, and economic changes, and identify needs and values as defined by the communities themselves.

As a result of National Fire Plan funding, communities and organizations completed 1,070 projects in FY 2002. The capacity of communities and organizations to manage change is reflected in the 467 projects implemented using a strategic plan. To include wildfire issues as an active part of future local action, more than 222 of these new and/or existing plans were updated.

Funds allocated across the nation addressed a full range of financial and technical assistance programs including fuel reduction and utilization projects; bio-energy feasibility studies, wood product utilization and market feasibility studies; support to modify or develop long-range fuels hazard reduction; and community economic development planning that expands and diversifies the use of forest products.

In FY 2002, the Forest Products Laboratory Technology Marketing Unit obtained $2 million to encourage the use of small diameter material and low-valued trees. The Forest Products Lab, as well as other technology transfer centers, plays an important role in providing accurate information for community projects.

The Technology Marketing Unit (Madison, WI) assists communities through technology transfer. Technical assistance varies from answering questions over the phone to onsite visits, working side-by-side with small businesses.

Examples of communities that have been provided and continue to receive technical assistance include:

- Enterprise, Oregon – Expanded markets for posts & poles as structural building elements by evaluating potential new markets and developing engineering

designs for several buildings constructed of small-diameter roundwood.

- Cascade, Idaho – Helped community leaders examine options when their local sawmill closed, by arranging a technical visit to a small community in California that had gone through a similar situation but had developed a small manufacturing facility that had created 25-30 jobs.
- St. Paul, Kansas – Conducted "train-the-trainer" lumber recovery study workshops for state utilization and marketing specialists. These efforts improve the ability of sawmills and other wood-using firms to provide sustainable employment and improve utilization of small-diameter softwoods and underutilized hardwoods.
- Victor and Darby, Montana – Evaluated use of forest residues as an alternative heat source for schools. The Forest Service contracted with specialists to develop engineering and economic alternatives, including equipment design and cost.
- Mountainair, New Mexico – Helped develop a juniper wood/plastic composite market for a variety of weather resistant outdoor signs. Provided technical and marketing assistance to help expand business markets, thus creating more jobs.
- Watertown, Wisconsin – Partnered with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to provide technical assistance on sawmill improvements to a local lumberyard. Technical assistance documented the community's need for modernization, and helped them acquire financing. Benefits include reduced manufacturing costs, improved efficiency, and more jobs.

Research

Three different organizations provide research for federal wildland fire management, including the Joint Fire Science Program, Forest Service Research and Development, and the US Geological Survey. These three organizations often leverage and complement each other to accomplish research projects. Leaders of the major fire research programs formed an interagency council – Fire Research Coordination Council – to guide fire science and technology transfer efforts.

In FY 2002, funding for 63 Forest Service research teams that started the previous year was continued under the National Fire Plan. Due to the long-term nature of research, many teams have multi-year projects. Fifteen additional teams were funded with $5 million of hazardous fuels funds.

1. Research Supporting Firefighting Capacity

Firefighting organizations must make quick and effective decisions as they battle wildfires – all in the face of great uncertainty, complexity, and changing conditions. Researchers are developing tools for better prediction of local fire weather, fire behavior and smoke dispersal. Better prediction means cost-savings in decisions about how to use firefighting resources and ensure greater safety of firefighters and the public. Twenty-six Forest Service research teams, two Joint Fire Science Program projects, and the interagency GeoMAC project were funded in FY 2002 in support of firefighting and public information and safety.

Examples of National Fire Plan research projects supporting firefighting capacity include:

Scientists in the Forest Service Northeast Research Station are developing an improved fire danger rating system that will enable more cost-effective response to potential fires. This research is a partnership with the New Jersey Forest Fire Service that is providing logistics support, fire history, and fire management treatment mapping as well as conducting yearly prescribed burns for data collection.

The Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW) is flying the FireMapper thermal-imaging radiometer and mapping cameras aboard the PSW Airborne Sciences Aircraft. The FireMapper accurately maps surface temperatures of fires and provides this intelligence more rapidly and cost-effectively to the Incident Command Team.

A computerized system called the "Ventilation Climate Information System" was recently completed by researchers supported by the Joint Fire Science Program to help analyze smoke and other pollutants produced by prescribed and wildland fires. The system accurately predicts inversions that result in reduced visibility on highways and impact human health. The system is valuable to health officials, air quality agencies, aerial fire suppression managers, law enforcement agencies, and fire planners.

GeoMAC is an internet based mapping tool that allows the public and wildland fire coordination centers to access online maps of current wildland fire locations. GeoMAC provides users with a way to view the location of the fire perimeter, nearby communities, roads, streams topography and other graphical information as well as local weather and other text information about the status of the fire. Fire perimeter data are updated several times a day from field observations, GPS data, IR imagery, aircraft and satellites. The GeoMAC website allows users to manipulate map information, zoom in and out to display fire information at various scales and detail, and print hard copy maps. GeoMAC was developed jointly by the US Geological Survey, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It is operated and housed by the US Geological Survey Rocky Mountain Mapping Center in Lakewood, Colorado. This website received more than 50 million hits during the 2002 fire season.

2. Research Supporting Rehabilitation

In FY 2002, 12 Forest Service research teams were continued and 18 Joint Fire Science Program projects also were funded in support of rehabilitation. Minimizing erosion and flooding damage and optimizing recovery of native vegetation in burned areas are topics being investigated. Tools, technologies, and knowledge from this research will assist land managers in applying burned area emergency rehabilitation and in monitoring restoration effectiveness. Researchers are also investigating postfire weed and pathogen invasions to find new ways to minimize their spread.

Examples of research projects supporting rehabilitation include:

- Researchers at the Forest Service Shrub Sciences Laboratory in Provo, Utah, and their cooperators are identifying ways to increase the successful establishment of plants seeded as part of burned area rehabilitation efforts. They also are working on biological control to minimize the establishment of exotic invasive weeds, such as cheatgrass, through the use of a naturally occurring smut fungus.
- The Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station is establishing reference locations to determine the effectiveness of emergency stabilization.
- The Forest Service Pacific Southwest Research Station is evaluating soil quality monitoring techniques for guiding rehabilitation.

3. Research Supporting Hazardous Fuels Reduction

In FY 2002, the National Fire Plan funded 29 Forest Service research teams and 37 Joint Fire Science Program projects in support of hazardous fuels reduction. This research will help managers set priorities and balance complex tradeoffs between long-term benefits of fuel reduction and possible shorter-term consequences of treatments. New research is underway to assess risks, anticipate treatment impacts, and develop new systems for harvesting forest undergrowth and small diameter trees.

Examples of research supporting hazardous fuels include:

- Colorado State University researchers, funded by the Joint Fire Science Program, completed a study that validated the effectiveness in mitigating fire severity, crown fire, and resistance to suppression efforts in certain ecosystems.
- Researchers at the Forest Products Lab in Madison, Wisconsin, are working with cooperators to develop structural wood products to utilize small diameter crooked trees.
- Cooperators at Wyoming Sawmill in Sheridan, Wyoming, developed a product called LamHeader that uses economy grade stud material for manufacturing a laminated engineered "I" shaped header product with engineered performance.
- The Baker City Municipal Watershed within the Wallowa/Whitman National Forest in Oregon was selected as a National Pilot Demonstration Site for fuel treatment options. The data collected from this field-based effort will be used to improve and modify the predictive capability of fuel consumption, fire effects, and smoke dispersion models.
- The Forest Products Laboratory demonstrated a wood-fiber filtration system that shows promise for cleaning contaminates from flowing waters on the Wayne National Forest. These filters clean acidic heavy metals found in the drainage from former mine sites. These filters can be made from juniper or other underutilized wood species.

4. Research Supporting Community Assistance

Eleven Forest Service research teams and one Joint Fire Science Program project were funded in FY 2002. Researchers are talking with community residents and sharing information on steps residents can take to make their homes fire safe, and developing alternative Firewise landscapes. Scientists also are asking people about their perceptions of fire and fuel management treatments. This information can guide more effective communication with the public.

Examples of research supporting community assistance include:

- The Fire Sciences Laboratory in Missoula, Montana, is studying factors contributing to home ignitions. A new video released in 2002, titled *Wildfire: Preventing Home Ignitions,* identifies steps homeowners can take to reduce the chances of fire damage or destruction.
- The Joint Fire Science Program is supporting a national study of public perceptions of wildland fire, fuels treatments, and related issues on public lands. Nearly 2,000 citizens were asked for their views. In addition, six regional surveys (in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Oregon and Utah) are gathering information on local and regional perceptions. This research will help managers and community leaders target fire safety messages and justify fuel treatments.

Contracting

In FY 2002, the Forest Service and Department of the Interior awarded contracts for more than $329 million. This total includes $70 million for hazardous fuels treatments, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation.

Examples of contracting efforts supporting the National Fire Plan include:

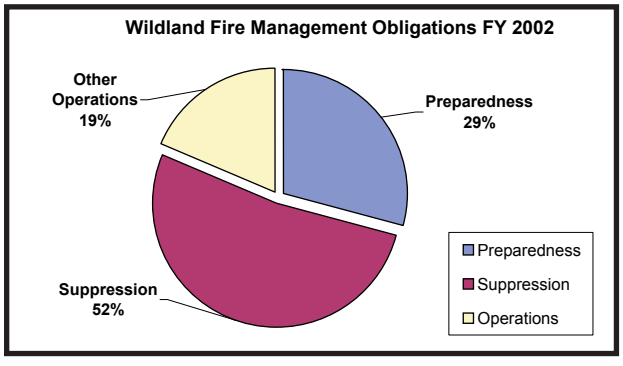
- The Forest Service and the Department of the Interior established aggressive contracting goals for the next three years. The DOI goal is to contract for 50%

of all approved project funding for fuels treatment and emergency stabilization and rehabilitation work by FY 2004. The Forest Service established a goal of 50% of approved project funding for mechanical fuels treatments and 20% of approved project funding for prescribed fire fuels treatments by FY 2005.

- A joint action plan was developed between the Forest Service and DOI to enhance procurement and meet the National Fire Plan contracting goals. It includes the following:
  - > Milestones to increase the availability and use of local small businesses in the performance of National Fire Plan work.
  - > Establishment of a joint Department of the Interior and Forest Service Strategy Team to address procurement and assistance issues for timely accomplishment of contracts and agreements.
  - > Coordination among the five federal fire management agencies on a geographical basis to reduce contract award time and increase the vendor pool.
- Use of the National Fire Plan Operational Reporting System (NFPORS) by both the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service to plan collaborative contracts and report to Congress and the public.
- A review of National Fire Plan contracting and assistance in the five federal fire management agencies was completed. The resulting report included identification of obstacles with recommendations to overcome them.
- Under P.L. 93-638, the Bureau of Indian Affairs awarded funds to tribes for hazardous fuel treatments and rehabilitation.

Accountability

Oversight, coordination, program development, and monitoring are critical to successful implementation of the National Fire Plan. Congress provided guidance on accountability as well as additional funding. In response, agency staffs developed a range of joint accountability measures including budget and financial systems, reports, and oversight reviews for assessing and evaluating program accomplishments.



1. Actions to Promote Accountability

Transparent, well-articulated, consistent policies and procedures provide for better oversight and review, and lead to greater accountability. To this end, the partners and stakeholders of the National Fire Plan worked cooperatively on many efforts during FY 2002, including the following:

Leadership and Organization

- The Wildland Fire Leadership Council was created to coordinate and implement the National Fire Plan and the Federal Wildland Fire Policy among federal agencies, states, counties, and tribes.
- The Wildland Fire Leadership Council approved a standard fire management plan template for Forest Service and Department of the Interior application. Fire Management Plans tier from land management plans and provide direction for the full range of fire management activities on public lands. Department of the Interior and Forest Service units will update all these plans by the end of 2004 to reflect current policy.
- The *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan – A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment,* was signed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, along with 17 western governors. The plan sets uniform performance requirements for delivery of the *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy* for both federal and state partners.
- The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior developed action plans for 20 of the 22 tasks in the Implementation Plan. The National Association of State Foresters took an active role developing two action plans and participating in many others. Significant progress was made on the plans as collaborative partners worked together. Progress will continue into 2003 and beyond.
- The Forest Service selected a new permanent National Fire Plan Coordinator and approved a new staff organization that reports to the Chief of the Forest Service.
- Both the Forest Service and the DOI have added new performance elements to agency administrators' annual evaluation plans.

Reporting

- The Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior reported jointly to Congress with specific plans and recommendations to supply native plant materials for emergency stabilization and longer-term rehabilitation efforts. The report is titled *The Interagency Program to Supply and Manage Native Plant Materials for Restoration and Rehabilitation on Federal Lands – April 2002.*
- The Forest Service and Department of the Interior

Wildland Fire Leadership Council

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council was developed to support implementation and coordination of the National Fire Plan and Federal Wildland Fire Policy. The Council meets quarterly and is currently chaired by the Chief of the Forest Service. Members include representatives from the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, the five federal fire management agencies, Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Association of State Foresters, National Governors Association, National Association of Counties, and the Intertribal Timber Council. The leadership council provides leadership for seamless management of the Federal Wildland Fire Program.

developed a common data collection and reporting system for reporting accomplishments called the National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS). This will allow real-time tracking of common categories and activities across all jurisdictions for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation, hazardous fuels treatment projects, and community assistance.

- An interagency fire-coding system is being developed that will allow for improved fire suppression cost tracking.

Performance Measures

- Common interagency performance measures were developed for baseline data collection in FY 2003 and for FY 2004 program measurement. These measures are outcome-oriented and are integrated with the departments' and agencies' Government Performance and Results Act strategic and annual performance plans and the FY 2004 budget justifications.

Conferences/Sharing Ideas

- The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior hosted two national collaboration conferences to share National Fire Plan successes and knowledge.

2. Program Evaluation & Oversight

The five federal wildland fire management agencies conducted a review of the progress in contracting for hazardous fuels and rehabilitation work. The review team identified areas of improvement to remove barriers, improve accountability, and better use contracting services. Specific targets for contracting are evolving through work on a *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan* task.

Looking Ahead

The second year of implementing the National Fire Plan resulted in significant collaborative efforts that crossed many boundaries. The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior are committed to success. Federal, tribal, state, county, and local entities, as well as private citizens, are engaged in the process. As the *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan* is implemented, engagement at all levels is evident, and demonstrates the vision and enthusiasm of stakeholders and partners for continued success.

Communication is critical in this expanding partnership. To ensure engagement and commitment, briefings will continue to provide up-to-date information to Congress, the Administration, employees, and other governmental entities. Dialogue with non-governmental entities and stakeholders from the local to the national level will continue and will be enhanced to ensure an open line for information, discussion, and continued engagement between all partners for support of National Fire Plan objectives.

Accountability is equally crucial. Testing the success of National Fire Plan goals requires field monitoring of the National Fire Plan supported projects. The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior are committed to utilizing field monitoring to ensure accountability.

The National Fire Plan will continue to present unique opportunities and challenges beyond the second year of implementation. The agencies will build on second-year benchmarks and continue to implement integrated wildland fire management policies and procedures. Increased emphasis on contracting for fuels hazard reduction is expected. Increased cooperation between the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior will ensure consistent and integrated fire management policies across the agencies.

Next steps for 2003:

- Sign the Fire Department Assistance Programs Memorandum of Understanding to provide a general framework of cooperation for the management and delivery of assistance programs to rural and volunteer fire departments among federal wildland fire management agencies, National Association of State Foresters, and Federal Emergency Management Agency – US Fire Administration.
- Sign a National Fuels Treatment Memorandum of Understanding among the Forest Service, Department of the Interior, National Association of State Foresters, and National Association of Counties for the development of a nationwide framework for a collaborative fuels treatment selection process.
- Sign the Interagency Cohesive Fuels Strategy for the five federal fire management agencies. The strategy

will provide a cohesive and unified statement of the purpose, methods and results of the federal fuels treatment program through a long-term program to restore fire-adapted ecosystems using mechanical treatment and reintroduction of fire.

- Accomplish actions, tasks and goals of the *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan*, working closely with stakeholders and partners, and update tasks as needed.
- Conduct briefings and provide National Fire Plan information to the Administration, Congress, stakeholders, employees, and others. Focus on integration of the National Fire Plan goals into agency priorities.
- Be accountable for FY 2003 National Fire Plan goals through field monitoring of National Fire Plan supported projects. Report accomplishments on the basis of common interagency performance measures.
- Improve communications with nongovernmental organizations and stakeholders to ensure collaboration on National Fire Plan projects and actions undertaken by federal agencies.
- The Administration will submit legislation to Congress to implement key aspects of the *Healthy Forests Initiative*. The intent of this bipartisan legislation is to significantly advance forest health efforts that prevent damage caused by catastrophic wildland fires.

Summary

The federal fire management agencies made great strides during the second year of the National Fire Plan implementation. Funding helped to protect the lives of firefighters and the public, protect communities and natural resources, and reverse the trend of deteriorating health of our forest and rangeland ecosystems. The agencies made progress in developing effective and consistent fire management policies. National Fire Plan resources increased initial attack capability, which helped keep fires small and reduced wildland fire threats to communities at risk. Public awareness is growing, the agencies are committed to an integrated approach, and Congress and the Administration are supportive. These factors will assure a strong foundation for stewardship of the Nation's resources for many years to come.